

The United States Attorney's Office

Southern District of Florida

Press Release

DEFENDANT PLEAD GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT MAIL AND WIRE FRAUD

July 20, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Henry Gutierrez, Postal Inspector in Charge, United States Postal Inspection Service, announced that defendants **Ian Alan Weiss** and **Max Bacal** entered guilty pleas on July 19, 2006, in Miami Federal District Court to one count of an Indictment charging conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud.

The defendants each face a maximum statutory term of imprisonment of twenty (20) years, a possible fine, and mandatory restitution. Sentencing is scheduled for September 27, 2006, before United States District Court Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga in Miami, Florida.

According to the Indictment, which was filed on March 23, 2006, Weiss, Bacal, and others solicited investments through CheckMate Financial, Inc., to support a supposed mobile check cashing operation. The Indictment alleges that Weiss, Bacal, and others fraudulently induced investors around the country to invest in CheckMate Financial. Weiss, Bacal, and others misrepresented that CheckMate Financial had at least one mobile check cashing unit that was in operation cashing checks in Florida, when, at the time these representations were made, CheckMate Financial did not have an operational mobile check cashing unit in Florida, or anywhere else, according to the charges.

According to the Indictment, potential investors were told that CheckMate Financial had numerous routes in operation for a mobile check cashing unit to cash checks at places such as construction sites, hospitals, cruise ships, and large factories to provide onsite payroll check cashing benefits for employees at these places using the mobile check cashing unit(s). The Indictment alleges that CheckMate Financial did not have an operational mobile check cashing unit nor did CheckMate Financial have a license from the State of Florida to cash checks. The Indictment charges that CheckMate Financial sales representatives told investors that they would earn a substantial return on their investment from CheckMate Financial's check cashing operations.

CheckMate Financial promoted the investment opportunity across the country through unsolicited telephone calls to potential investors. Weiss, Bacal, and others fraudulently induced investors to invest a total of more than \$2.5 million in CheckMate Financial, according to documents filed in this case.

Ian Alan Weiss served as a "closer" and "loader" at CheckMate Financial, according to documents filed in connection with the guilty plea. A "closer" was a salesperson who attempted to close deals with potential investors, while a "loader" attempted to obtain additional investments from people who had already invested in CheckMate. The indictment charges that frontiers and loaders made material misrepresentations in soliciting investments. Max Bacal was the head closer at CheckMate Financial, according to the facts he admitted at his plea hearing.

Ian Alan Weiss and Max Bacal are the fourth and fifth defendants to plead guilty in this case. On April 4, 2006, Ronald Sloan pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. On June 30, 2006, Ronald Sloan was sentenced to 63 months in prison. On June 15, 2006, Melvin Webman pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud. Melvin Webman is scheduled to be sentenced on August 24, 2006. On July 7, 2006, Chester Potash pled guilty to one count of conspiracy. He is scheduled to be sentenced on September 14, 2006.

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of the United States Postal Inspection Service. This case is being prosecuted by Jeffrey Steger and David Farnham, Trial Attorneys, United States Department of Justice, Office of Consumer Litigation.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.

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